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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/992,952	11/05/2001	Uwe Jantsch	5085-17	6769

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EXAMINER

CHANEY, CAROL DIANE

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1745

DATE MAILED: 08/27/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/992,952

Applicant(s)

JANTSCH ET AL.

Examiner

Carol Chaney

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 05 November 2001.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 6 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-5 and 7 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 3, 4 6) ☐ Other:

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent, or on an international application by another who has fulfilled the requirements of paragraphs (1), (2), and (4) of section 371(c) of this title before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent.

The changes made to 35 U.S.C. 102(e) by the American Inventors Protection Act of 1999 (AIPA) and the Intellectual Property and High Technology Technical Amendments Act of 2002 do not apply when the reference is a U.S. patent resulting directly or indirectly from an international application filed before November 29, 2000. Therefore, the prior art date of the reference is determined under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) prior to the amendment by the AIPA (pre-AIPA 35 U.S.C. 102(e)).

Claims 1, 4, 5 and 7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Buxbaum, US Patent 6,183,543 B1.

With regards to claim 1, Buxbaum discloses an apparatus for extracting hydrogen from a gas mixture. The apparatus includes a hydrogen permeable membrane alloys. Nb-Au (Au 1-10%), Nb-Pt (Pt 1-10%) and Nb-Pd (1-10% Pd) are disclosed alloys. (See column 12, lines 31-51.)

With regards to claims 4 and 5, Buxbaum discloses forming the alloys by “specifically contacting a second layer to a first layer...” (Column 12, lines 34-36.) It is the position of the examiner that “contacting” is a type of mechanical plating process. Further, “diffusion heat treatment” is interpreted as encompassing diffusion occurring at

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any temperature lower than the melting point of the alloy, including ambient temperature.

With regards to claim 7, the recitation describing the hydrogen permeation membrane as "for a fuel cell" is considered to recite an intended use, and is not given patentable weight. The claim is interpreted as describing a hydrogen permeation membrane, which is disclosed by Buxbaum.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 2 and 3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Buxbaum, US Patent 6,183,543 B1 in view of Buxbaum, US Patent 5,215,729.

As discussed above, the Buxbaum '543 patent discloses applicants' invention essentially as claimed, with the exception that the '543 patent does not disclose a hydrogen permeation membrane containing either zirconium or hafnium in addition to niobium and one of Pd, Ru, Re, Pt, Au, or Rh.

The Buxbaum '729 patent teaches the niobium alloys Nb 1%Zr and Nb 10Hf 1Ti are stronger, or non-hydrogen embrittling, compared with pure niobium. (See '729 patent, column 3, lines 3-6,) Thus, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in

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the art to use either Nb 1%Zr or Nb 10Hf 1Ti rather than pure Nb in the hydrogen permeable membranes of the Buxbaum '543 invention, in order to have a stronger alloy.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claim 6 is allowed. The nearest prior art of Buxbaum discloses niobium alloy hydrogen permeation membranes, but the prior art fails to suggest the Buxbaum invention as a fuel cell component.

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. The following patent disclose palladium/niobium hydrogen permeation membranes:

Darling, GB 1 292 025

Makrides et al., US Patent 3,350,846

Behr et al., US Patent 4,496,373

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Carol Chaney whose telephone number is (703) 305-3777. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon - Fri 8:00am-4:30pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patrick Ryan can be reached on 703-308-2383. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703) 872-9306.

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Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-0661.



Carol Chaney
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1745

cc